



**Morning Alert - Monday, October 23, 2017**

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

All broadcasters gave top play to reports on super Typhoon Lan, which hit the Kanto region this morning, bringing heavy rain and strong winds over a wide area. Broadcasters reported numerous disruptions to the transportation network.

All national papers led with the results of the general election yesterday showing that the ruling coalition of the LDP and the Komeito party won 312 of the 465 seats in total, two more than the two-thirds majority required to propose constitutional revision. Four seats were still undecided due to delays in vote counting on account of inclement weather. NHK reported that a DOS spokesperson commented on the election results, saying the U.S. “looks forward to continuing to work together with our solid ally Japan on a variety of issues in the region and around the world.”

## POLITICS

### Ruling coalition wins two-thirds majority again

All papers reported that the LDP won by a landslide in the general election on Sunday primarily because of the balkanization of opposition parties, which enabled the LDP to “fish in troubled waters,” as votes critical of the Abe administration were apparently split among candidates from the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ), the Party of Hope, and the Japanese Communist Party in most of the 289 single-seat constituencies. This was the LDP’s fifth consecutive victory in a national election under Abe’s leadership, with the premier telling the press late Sunday night: “The results reflected the voters’ view that politics must be implemented based on a solid political foundation.” The dailies said the latest election victory will give a boost to the prime minister’s bid to seek reelection as the LDP president in September next year. LDP Secretary General Nikai stressed last night that the premier won a “sufficient mandate” to secure a third term. According to Yomiuri,

Abe plans to retain the current ministers when he forms a new cabinet on Nov. 1 immediately after he is reelected prime minister at the parliament on the same day.

Several papers claimed, however, that the LDP's massive victory may have not necessarily represented voters' strong confidence in the prime minister, as exit polls and many recent public opinion surveys showed that nonsupport exceeded support for the administration. An unnamed cabinet minister told Asahi that the Japanese voters perhaps wanted a "stable administration, but not necessarily the Abe administration."

### **CDPJ triumphant, Party of Hope dispirited**

All papers wrote that the CDPJ became the largest opposition party by winning 54 seats, surpassing the 49 seats earned by the Party of Hope. CDPJ leader Edano stressed that his party is committed to listening to the people's opinions attentively as many voters have become alienated under the Abe administration. Party of Hope President Koike, who is currently visiting Paris on an official visit as the Tokyo leader, conceded that her remarks ahead of the start of the election campaign that her party would not accept all Democratic Party lawmakers backfired by turning off many voters who felt she was "too arrogant." According to Asahi, an unnamed senior LDP official said: "More people disliked Abe right after the dissolution of the Lower House, but then Koike became even more unpopular than him. The LDP should be grateful to her."

The dailies conjectured that many voters supported the CDPJ because its candidates were viewed as "principled" in their political ideology, as opposed to some Party of Hope candidates, who were seen as "dishonest" because they wasted no time in bolting the beleaguered Democratic Party. Since many of the policy goals of the Party of Hope seemed similar to those of the LDP, some swing voters chose to support the CDPJ instead of the Party of Hope. The Japanese Communist Party lost almost half of its previous seats, as some of its supporters apparently chose to back CDPJ candidates. The Osaka-based Japan Innovation Party also performed poorly.

Several papers projected that momentum for opposition realignment may pick up now as most Upper House Diet members of the Democratic Party probably will not go along with Party President Maehara's decision to join the Party of Hope given its dismal performance in Sunday's election. Some of them will seek a tie-up with the CDPJ and those who prevailed in the general election as "independents," including former Prime Minister Noda and former Foreign Minister Okada.

### **Abe to move forward in seeking constitutional revision**

All papers projected that following the landslide victory in the general election on Sunday, Prime Minister Abe is likely to pursue his signature policy of amending the Constitution even more aggressively especially because proponents of constitutional revision now account for 80% of all Lower House members, including those of the Party of Hope and the Japan Innovation Party.

Regarding constitutional revision, the premier said last night on a TV show: “Many Party of Hope politicians are interested in engaging in constructive debate. I would like to cooperate with like-minded Diet members, including those from the Party of Hope and the Japan Innovation Party.” As the prime minister is very eager to amend Article 9 so as to make the existence of the SDF explicit, he is expected to instruct senior LDP officials to expedite internal discussions so that the ruling party can come up with a specific proposal on the clause. However, the Komeito party, the LDP’s junior ruling partner, is extremely cautious about the idea. The Party of Hope is not eager to alter the war-renouncing provision anytime soon either.

### **Abe to conduct “strong diplomacy” following election victory**

All dailies predicted that Prime Minister Abe is expected to conduct “strong diplomacy” based on the assessment that the voters in the general election on Sunday gave a strong mandate to his foreign and national security policies, especially toward North Korea. When hosting President Trump in Tokyo next month, Abe plans to call attention to his “political honeymoon” with the U.S. leader with the goal of deterring North Korea’s provocations. Sankei claimed that by choosing Japan as the first leg in his multiple-nation Asian tour, the Trump administration is hoping to send a message that the U.S.-Japan alliance is “rock solid” no matter what happens on the Korean Peninsula. Abe is also hoping to display his strong ties with President Trump in the upcoming East Asian Summit in the Philippines and the APEC leaders’ meeting in Vietnam.

The prime minister will also hold a summit with Russian President Putin on the margins of the annual APEC confab in an effort to achieve a breakthrough in the Northern Territories dispute. He is also looking to host a trilateral summit with South Korea and China in December.

### **LDP politicians in Okinawa wage uphill battle in general election**

Mainichi said LDP candidates were defeated in three out of four single-seat districts in Okinawa in the general election on Sunday, suspecting that the recent incident involving a Futenma-based CH-53E helicopter may have further alienated local voters from the ruling party. The daily said Okinawa Governor Onaga was strongly committed to supporting opposition candidates in the election campaign in the belief that the Abe administration would forge ahead with the FRF construction even more forcefully if the LDP won even one of the four single-seat constituencies.

## **SECURITY**

### **Defense Minister Onodera to attend ASEAN conference**

Several Saturday morning papers reported that Defense Minister Onodera will visit the Philippines for four days starting on Sunday to attend an “ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting Plus” conference, noting that he is expected to hold bilateral and trilateral talks with his U.S. and South Korean counterparts on the sidelines to discuss the situation in North Korea. During a session with Defense Secretary Mattis, Onodera will take up the recent emergency landing of a Futenma-based CH-53E helicopter and call for thorough measures to prevent a recurrence.

### **Onaga calls for suspension of helipad operations at Northern Training Area**

Saturday morning's Asahi reported that during a regular press conference on Friday, Okinawa Governor Onaga said he will ask the central government to halt the U.S. military's use of three of the helipads at the Northern Training Area. The governor explained that he plans to make the proposal in response to the recent emergency landing by a CH-53E helicopter. "Although I would like to call for the removal of all six helipads, that would be very difficult," he said. "Because of the proximity of the three of them to residential areas, their impact on peoples' lives is problematic."

### **Japanese fighters conduct joint training with U.S. bombers**

Sunday's Yomiuri wrote that two ASDF F-2 fighter jets carried out joint training with two USAF B-1 bombers off Kyushu on Saturday with the goal of applying pressure on North Korea.

### **PAC-3 drill to be held in Hokkaido**

Saturday morning's Sankei wrote that the ASDF plans to deploy a PAC-3 battery at a camp in Erimo, Hokkaido, on Oct. 31 to conduct training in preparation for the possibility of a ballistic missile launch by North Korea. The installation was chosen as a training site because North Korea's projectiles flew over the community in late August and mid-September when the DPRK tested ballistic missiles.

### **USS McCain's return to Yokosuka to be delayed**

Sunday's Tokyo Shimbun took up a 7th Fleet announcement on Saturday that the USS McCain's planned arrival for repair work at Yokosuka Naval Station in late October will be delayed because of damage detected on its starboard side while being towed from Singapore to Japan. The Aegis warship, which was involved in a fatal collision in August, will be inspected at a port in the Philippines before returning to its homeport of Yokosuka.

### **USAF general may be appointed as top military commander in Pacific**

Sankei wrote that Pacific Air Forces Commander Terrence O'Shaughnessy is likely to be tapped as the next PACOM commander, adding that he would be the first Air Force official ever to be in charge of the Pacific Command. The post is currently held by Admiral Harry Harris, who is scheduled to retire next year.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Kobe Steel scandal shakes American trust in Japanese products**

Sunday's Sankei wrote that American consumer confidence in Japanese products has been damaged by the data falsification scandal involving Kobe Steel, noting that the Big Three automakers and other companies have been forced to launch investigations to confirm the safety of their products using steel components supplied by the Japanese company. The Justice Department and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are considering launching their own investigations into the scandal, and the Pentagon is reportedly checking the extent to which Kobe Steel products have been used in existing military equipment and platforms. The daily expressed

concern that on top of another scandal in which final auto inspections were apparently conducted by unauthorized mechanics at Nissan, the Kobe Steel controversy may raise doubts about the overall safety of Japanese products in the U.S.

### **Japan to seek effectuation of TPP without New Zealand**

Saturday morning's Sankei wrote that Japan is deeply concerned over the defeat of the ruling party in the recent general election in New Zealand since the current government has been one of the most vocal advocates of free trade among the 11 TPP members and the victorious Labor Party has called for renegotiation of the regional trade liberalization accord. The GOJ is determined to dismiss possible requests for renegotiation from the incoming New Zealand government, with a Japanese source saying: "We will seek to effectuate the accord without New Zealand if necessary."

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Senior Chinese Communist Party official calls for improved ties with Japan**

Sunday's Yomiuri took up press remarks made on Saturday by a high-ranking Chinese Communist Party official in charge of foreign affairs, who stressed the need to improve ties between Beijing and Tokyo by saying: "The two nations face new opportunities, but challenges remain. We should both take advantage of the opportunities and remove the challenges."

### **Japanese diplomat conveys message to DPRK official**

Several Sunday papers reported from Moscow that visiting MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Kanasugi disclosed on Saturday that he conveyed a message to a senior DPRK diplomat charged with North American affairs at an international conference held in the Russian capital on the same day. Yomiuri speculated that the message included Japan's opposition to Pyongyang's nuclear and missile development.

